

Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

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FM AMCONSUL SYDNEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4888

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

UNCLAS SYDNEY 2331

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 9 "VIRTUALLY" TO READ "INTIMATELY")

E.O. 11652 NA

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, AS

SUBJ: STRIKES AND SLOWDOWNS IN SYDNEY CONTINUE

REF: SYDNEY 1747, 2304, 2315

SUMMARY

STRIKES AND SLOWDOWNS IN SYDNEY ARE SPREADING TO OTHER INDUSTRIES AND CONTINUE TO HAMPER AIR AND RAIL TRAVEL, POSTAL AND TELEGRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS AND ELECTRIC POWER DISTRIBUTION. SITUATION IS GETTING WORSE, NOT BETTER. THERE ARE SOME INDICATIONS THAT PUBLIC APATHY WEARING THIN.

1. THE CRIPPLING STRIKE AT SYDNEY AIRPORT BY 60 RADIO TECHNICAL OFFICERS CONTINUES WITH NO END IN SIGHT. THE FAILURE OF RADIO RELAY EQUIPMENT HAS NOW SHUT SYDNEY AIRPORT INDEFINITELY BECAUSE OF LACK OF AIRPORT-TO-PLANE CONTACT, EFFECTLY BLACKING OUT THE SYDNEY CONTROL AREA STRETCHING FROM BRISBANE TO JUST NORTH OF MELBOURNE. CONGEN HAS
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LEARNED THAT RADIO TECHNICAL OFFICERS ON STRIKE ARE

RECEIVING 100 DOLLARS PER WEEK IN STRIKE PAY SO THERE APPEARS TO BE NO OVERRIDING REASON FOR THEIR IMMEDIATE RETURN TO WORK. PAN AMERICAN AIRLINES FLIGHTS FROM THE US TO HONG KONG USED BRISBANE AIRPORT TODAY AND THE FATE OF THEIR BOEING 747 FLIGHT TOMORROW IS UNDETERMINED. A U.S. DIPLOMATIC COURIER ARRIVED SYDNEY THIS MORNING AFTER A 17 HOUR BUS TRIP FROM BRISBANE WITH 18 POUCHES TAKING UP 6 SEATS ON THE BUS.

2. "THE NSW ELECTRICITY BROWN OUT" CONTINUES TO WORSEN AS THE STATE GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED TO STAND FIRM AGAINST THE LABOR UNION. THE LABOR UNION OFFERED TO COMPROMISE THEIR 35 HOUR WEEK DEMAND TO 37 1/2 HOURS, BUT THIS WAS REFUSED BY SIR ROBERT ASKIN, PREMIER OF NSW. INTERESTINGLY THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION, PAT HILLS, URGED POWER STATION EMPLOYEES TO ADOPT A MORE REASONABLE ATTITUDE AND RETURN TO NORMAL OPERATING CONDITIONS. OVER 100 AREAS OF SYDNEY HAVE EXPERIENCED BLACKOUTS LASTING FOR AN HOUR OR TWO DURING THE PAST 2 DAYS. THE LIMITING OF POWER BY ELECTRICITY COMMISSION EMPLOYEES IS A TACTIC ADOPTED OVER TWO MONTHS AGO TO FORCE THEIR DEMAND FOR A 35 HOUR WEEK, EVEN THOUGH THE STATE INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION HAS TWICE DENIED THEIR REQUEST.

3. A BAN ON OVERTIME AT THE POST OFFICE REGIONAL CENTER IN SYDNEY AS RESULTED IN A BACKLOG OF OVER 14 MILLION PIECES OF MAIL WITH DELAYS IN MAIL DELIVERY UP TO 10 DAYS. UNION EMPLOYEES HAVE IMPOSED A BAN ON OVERTIME IN SUPPORT OF A DEMAND THAT OVERTIME AT THE MAIL CENTER SHOULD BE WORKED ON A VOLUNTARY BASIS INSTEAD OF UNDER THE PRESENT COMPULSORY SYSTEM. POST MASTER GENERAL, BOWEN IS ATTEMPTING TO ARRANGE A MEETING WITH THE AMALGAMATED POST WORKERS UNION TO TRY AND SETTLE THIS DISPUTE.

4. THE SYDNEY ELECTRIC TRAIN NETWORK IS AGAIN THREATENED WITH A STRIKE OVER THE ISSUE OF TRAINING GUARDS TO DRIVE SYDNEY TRAINS IN AN EMERGENCY. THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT COMMISSION AGREED TO THIS TRAINING LAST MONTH AT A COMPULSORY CONFERENCE BY A CONCILIATION COMMISSIONER, BUT THE AUSTRALIAN FEDERATED UNION OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINE MEN UNCLASSIFIED

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REFUSED TO TRAIN THE GUARDS. THE UNION AND COMMISSION MEMBERS ARE MEETING TO TRY AND POSTPONE ANY STRIKE ACTION.

5. AUSTRALIAN PORTS ARE AGAIN FACING LABOR DIFFICULTIES BECAUSE OF A DISPUTE BETWEEN THE WATERSIDE WORKERS FEDERATION AND IRONICALLY, THE MINISTER FOR LABOR CLYDE CAMERON. THIS DISPUTE IS OVER CAMERON'S PLAN THAT THE AUSTRALIAN STEVEDORING INDUSTRY AUTHORITY (ASIA) SHOULD BE THE

LEGAL EMPLOYER OF WATERSIDE WORKERS IN THE PORT OF DARWIN FROM NOVEMBER 19. THE WATERSIDE WORKERS FEAR IF THE AUTHORITY GETS THIS CONTROL IN DARWIN, IT WILL EXTEND IT TO 40 OTHER SMALL AUSTRALIAN PORTS INVOLVING ABOUT 3,000 WATERSIDE WORKERS. THE WWF PLANS TO STRIKE IN ABOUT 3 WEEKS TIME AT DARWIN AND THE 40 PORTS IF ASIA GETS CONTROL OF THE DARWIN WATERSIDE WORKERS.

6. SOME 600 MEMBERS OF THE HEALTH AND RESEARCH EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION AT SYDNEY UNIVERSITY WENT ON STRIKE AT MIDNIGHT. THE EMPLOYEES ARE STRIKING ABOUT WAGES AND CONDITIONS AND BECAUSE THE UNIVERSITY'S ADMINISTRATION HAS NOT BEGAN TALKS ON THEIR CLAIM.

7. ONE BRIGHT SPOT IN THE AIRPORT SITUATION OCCURRED WHEN AIRCRAFT REFUELLERS WHO WALKED OFF THE JOB AT SYDNEY, MELBOURNE, BRISBANE AND HOBART RETURNED TO WORK TODAY.

8. A 15 MONTH TRUCE BETWEEN OIL COMPANIES AND REFINERY WORKERS OVER A DEMAND FOR A 35 HOUR WEEK ENDED YESTERDAY WHEN EMPLOYERS' REPRESENTATIVES SAID THEY HAD REACHED THE END OF THE ROAD IN PRIVATE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE UNIONS. EMPLOYERS RECENTLY OFFERED THE REFINERY EMPLOYEES A 37 1/2 HOUR WEEK FROM NEXT JANUARY AND A 35 HOUR WEEK FROM JANUARY, 1975, BUT THIS WAS TURNED DOWN BY THE 9 UNIONS INVOLVED IN THE CLAIM. TALKS ARE CURRENTLY CONTINUING WITH THE COMMONWEALTH ARBITRATION COMMISSION WHICH HOPES TO PRODUCE A SATISFACTORY COMPROMISE.

9. COMBINED IMPACT OF THESE DISPUTES, ALL INTIMATELY AFFECTING DAILY PUBLIC LIFE MAY SOON APPROACH EVEN SYDNEY'S HIGH THRESHHOLD OF TOLERANCE.

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